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Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus



February 23, 2023

The Honorable Joshua Shapiro, Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
225 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Shapiro,

Our state budget is the best measure of our priorities, and an effective tool to address racial and social justice, as well as close the racial wealth gap in Pennsylvania. In anticipation of your budget address, the members of the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus ("PLBC") strongly urge you to guide your budget proposal through the lens of equity. We urge you to prioritize revenue and spending programs that will positively impact Black Indigenous and People of Color ("BIPOC") and disenfranchised communities in Pennsylvania.

In the wake of the pandemic and the murder of George Floyd, the PLBC advanced budget initiatives that addressed inequities in state investments, worked to remove systemic and racist barriers to state government, and intentionally called for state funding that is responsive to the needs of our communities. To inform our budget priorities, we established our Subcommittee on Budget Equity, advocated for an equity office in the Governor's Office, and held Budget Listening Sessions with the Budget Secretary and the Commonwealth's BIPOC leaders.

Much like the budget work of the PLBC, your budget address will lay the foundation for your agenda and will signal to BIPOC communities your commitment to boldly invest in our families, schools, businesses and communities. The PLBC encourages you to speak directly to the inherent barriers in our institutions that need to be broken down and replaced with equitable, not equal, solutions, much as you did during your candidacy for governor. Given the unprecedented size of the state's budget stabilization

fund, a Democratic majority in the House and your leadership, our next budget must:

- Continue to invest in PLBC's ongoing priorities, including our two HBCU's Cheyney University and Lincoln University, Level Up or similar public education funding, gun violence prevention, targeted funds for BIPOC and small businesses, an increased minimum wage, Black maternal health programs, Whole Home Repair, and many others; and
- Appropriately fund state agencies that serve and protect the interests of BIPOC communities, such as the Department of Environmental Protection's Office of Environmental Justice and the Department of Health's Women, Infant and Children Bureau; and
- Level the playing field with social equity programs in burgeoning industries, such as cannabis and renewable energies; and
- Aggressively commit to transformative policies, such as indigent defense, student and medical debt relief, an end to LGBT+ discrimination, and addressing racial profiling in traffic stops.

Your first budget address should set the framework to realize the vision of the Pennsylvania that you described as a candidate, "where poverty doesn't get ignored and prosperity isn't limited to certain zip codes." The PLBC looks forward to walking this road with you. Our Subcommittee on Budget Equity invites your administration to participate in our Budget Listening Sessions and will propose more specific budget priorities and strategies in the upcoming weeks. Together, we can advance an equitable, anti-racist budget that ensures the health, safety and prosperity of *all* Pennsylvanians.

Respectfully,



Justin C. Fleming
State Representative, House District 105
PLBC Budget Equity Subcommittee Chair



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